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Managing School Transitions: Promising Practices in Alberta's Schools

A Support Resource

April 2009

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Education

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

PURPOSE 4

A Support Resource for School Communities 4

INTRODUCTION 5

School Transition Strategies Described 5
Alberta Initiative for School Improvement (AISI) School Transitions Projects 6

KEY LEARNINGS FROM RELEVANT LITERATURE 7

Guiding Principles 7
Promising Practices 8
Implementation Strategies 12
Realized Benefits 14

PROMISING PRACTICES FROM THE ALBERTA INITIATIVE FOR SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT 15

Overview 15
Analysis 16
Home-to-School: Community Collaboration Project 20
Home-to-School: Early Start to ECS Project 22
Home-to-School: More for Four Project 24
Home-to-School: Early Intervention: Jump Start Preschool Project 27
Home-to-School: Literacy and Parents Program 29
Elementary-to-Junior High School: Building on Student Learning Project 31
Elementary-to-Junior High School: Middle Years Literacy – Elementary Training Project 33
Elementary-to-Junior High School: Whatever it Takes: Strategies to Support Struggling Students Project 35
Elementary-to-Junior High School: Kidscan Project 37
Junior High School-to-High School: Students in Transition Supports Project 39
Junior High School-to-High School: Supporting At-Risk Students Project 41
Junior High School-to-High School: Comprehensive Portfolio System to Enhance Career Development Project 44
Junior High School-to-High School: CLC 1 Plugging the Gaps in Transition Project 46
High School to Post-Secondary Education and/or Employment: Successful Students via High School Completion 48
High School to Post-Secondary Education and/or Employment: Off-Campus Success for At-Risk Students 50
High School to Post-Secondary Education and/or Employment: Pyramid of Interventions 51

BIBLIOGRAPHY 53

APPENDICES 56

Appendix A: Factors That Facilitate Positive Transitions 56
Appendix B: Other Provincial Transition Planning Resources 58

ENDNOTES 59

PURPOSE

A Support Resource for School Communities

School transitions can be challenging for many students. The probability of successful transitions is significantly increased when school communities work together to coordinate comprehensive school transition support strategies.

This document is intended to help school authorities, administrators, educators, and parents work together to support children and youth during the following key school transitions:

- Home-to-school.
- Elementary-to-junior high school.
- Junior high school-to-high school.
- High school-to-post-secondary education and/or employment.

This resource is intended to help school authorities, administrators, educators, and parents work together to support children and youth during four key school transitions.

Support is provided in the form of

- guiding principles, promising practices, implementation strategies, and realized benefits related to managing school transitions as gleaned from the literature; and
- summaries of promising practices from sixteen Alberta Initiative for School Improvement (AISI) projects that focused on managing school transitions.

The bibliography, endnotes, and appendices offer additional information and opportunities for further reading.

The guiding principles, promising practices, implementation strategies, and realized benefits gleaned from the literature as well as from the profiled AISI projects are intended to inform but not necessarily prescribe the development and implementation of transition support strategies in Alberta. Stakeholders are invited to consider the information and resources offered in this support resource as they collaborate to develop and implement transition support strategies that suit the unique contexts in their schools and school communities.

Note: The Alberta Children and Youth Initiative (ACYI) developed a complementary transition planning protocol to support transitions for youth with diverse needs. For more information, see *ACYI Transition Planning Protocol for Youth with Disabilities: Your Guide to Reaching New Heights*; December 2007[i]. Manitoba, Ontario and Saskatchewan have also developed transition planning support resources (see Appendix B).

INTRODUCTION

School Transition Strategies Described

School transition strategies are purposeful, coordinated, and outcomes-oriented approaches designed to help students successfully move from home to school to post-secondary education or employment. To contribute to healthy transitions for students, strategies should

1. meet students' basic needs;
2. encourage and maintain positive relationships and a sense of *community*;
3. provide students with required supports and resources in each new environment and share information among all stakeholders;
4. promote student self-advocacy;
5. help students' create their own identities;
6. be *comprehensive,* and *collaboratively* planned and *coordinated* with consideration for the local *context*; and
7. ensure *continuity* and consistency within and between environments.[ii]

School transition strategies are purposeful, coordinated, and outcomes-oriented approaches designed to help students successfully transition from home to school to post-secondary education or employment.

Collectively, these strategies create a positive school climate in which students feel a sense of belonging.

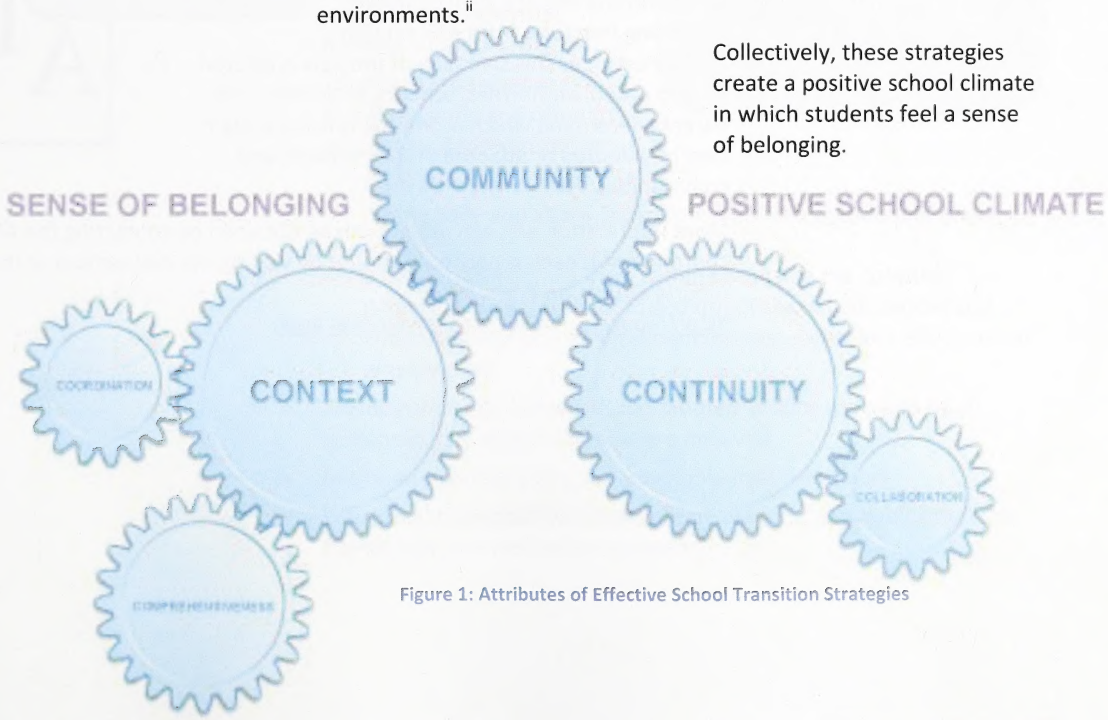


Figure 1: Attributes of Effective School Transition Strategies

Alberta Initiative for School Improvement (AISI) School Transitions Projects

The goal of AISI is to support the improvement of student learning and performance by encouraging educators, parents, and the community to work collaboratively to address local needs and circumstances through innovative and creative initiatives.

In March 2009, Cycle 1, 2 and 3 AISI projects that focused on improving the management of school transitions were reviewed to identify promising practices that could be localized by school communities in Alberta. Each project was reviewed and assessed using the following questions:

1. To what extent did the project align with the *guiding principles* of effective transition strategies identified in the literature?
2. To what extent did the project align with the *promising practices* identified in the literature?
3. How did the project benefit students' school transition experiences and how were these benefits demonstrated and/or measured?

Consideration was also given to socio-economic, demographic, and geographic factors to ensure a range of contexts were represented.

Sixteen AISI projects that are benefiting students' school transitions are profiled in this resource.

Sixteen projects were selected based on the review and are profiled in the **Promising Practices from AISI** section of this resource. This sampling of projects is offered to help school authorities, schools, educators, and parents determine which promising practices might best be adopted or adapted in their schools and communities.

More information on each project can be obtained by contacting the AISI coordinator in each school authority or by visiting the AISI section of the Alberta Education Web site at http://education.alberta.ca/admin/aisi.aspx.

KEY LEARNINGS FROM RELEVANT LITERATURE

Guiding Principles

A review of the literature reveals that effective school transition strategies are characterized by the following guiding principles:

- Individual needs are addressed. For example, additional time, support and differentiated instruction are available for students.
- Local *contexts* are considered.
- A sense of *community* is created by providing welcoming environments for students, families and educators.
- Opportunities exist to foster positive teacher-student and student-student interactions and relationships.
- *Continuity* is promoted through a range of ongoing evidence-based transition strategies that are employed within a *comprehensive* learning support program.
- Transition strategies are employed early and often to support student transitions
  - from home-to-school;
  - during daily and yearly transitions between schools and grade levels;
  - when students move from within or outside the country;
  - when students transition in and out of special education; and
  - when students leave high school for post-secondary education or employment.
- *Collaboration* and coherent, *coordinated* actions are taken by all stakeholders – all stakeholders are involved.
- Information is shared by and accessible to stakeholders.
- Educators' have positive beliefs about students' academic interests, friendships, and motivation to learn.

Effective school transition strategies are characterized by the following guiding principles:

- **Address individual needs**
- **Consider local contexts**
- **Create a sense of community**
- **Foster positive interactions and relationships**
- **Promote continuity**
- **Employ transition strategies early and often**
- **Collaborate to ensure actions are coherent and coordinated**
- **Share information among stakeholders**
- **Hold positive beliefs about students**

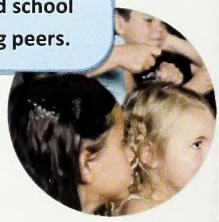
Promising Practices

Experience is showing that the following transition practices, strategies and programs are showing promise (ACYI, 2007; UCLA Center for Mental Health in Schools, 1999, 2003; Tilleczek, 2007; Saskatchewan Learning, 2007; Schumacher, publication date unknown; Southern Regional Educational Board, 2005; Department of Education and Training, New South Wales Government, 2006; Line and Williams, 2007; Herlihy, 2007; Taylor, 2007; Bangser, 2008, and Institute of Education Sciences, 2008).

Experience is showing that several transition practices, strategies and programs are showing promise.

- The Alberta Children and Youth Initiative (ACYI) transition planning protocol for youth with disabilities (2007) identifies the following six best practice characteristics:
  - Person-centred planning.
  - Youth involvement.
  - Family involvement.
  - Community involvement.
  - Identification and use of a transition coordinator
  - Inter-agency collaboration.[iii]
- Early childhood programs, before- and after-school programs, grade transition intervention strategies, welcome programs for families transitioning to a new school, and vocational and career education programs have been show to be effective.[iv]
- Positive student transitions can be facilitated by addressing factors at each of the following levels with a focus at the meso-level:
  - School Culture and Structure Factors (Macro-level).
  - Factors related to Classes, Friends and Families (Meso-level).
  - Factors related to Youth and Educators (Micro-level) (See Appendix A for more information).[v]

Effective home to school transition practices involve making connections between families and school, the community and school, and the child and school as well as among peers.



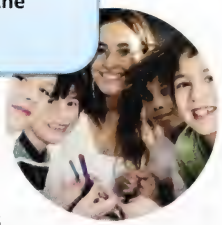
- Transitional approaches to assessment, curriculum, and pedagogy influence successful transitions for students. Themes common to effective transitions strategies include
  - addressing needs of families;
  - making orientation packages and extra courses available in advance;
  - creating welcoming environments, encouraging extra-curricular participation, and offering student

counseling;

- using a 'buddy system';
- adapting classroom instruction and assessment to meet individual needs; and
- providing professional development.[vi]

- Effective home to school transition practices involve making connections between family and school, child and school, peers, and the community. [vii]
- Elementary to junior high school transitions are accompanied by intellectual, moral, social, emotional, and physical changes taking place in at least part of the transition group at any given time. Students making this transition need support prior to, during, and after their move to maintain their social, psychological, and academic well-being. Effective and comprehensive transition programs involve (1) building a sense of community; (2) responding to the needs and concerns of students; and (3) providing appropriate, faceted approaches to facilitate the transition process. Effective programs also

Effective elementary to junior high transition programs involve building a sense of community, responding to the needs and concerns of students, and providing appropriate, faceted approaches to facilitate the transition process.



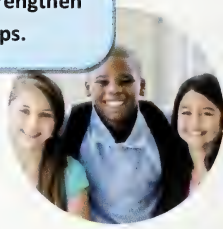
  - provide activities that involve students, parents, educators, and staff from both schools;
  - establish a replicable and annually updated transition protocol;
  - establish a timeline for the transition process;
  - incorporate scheduled collaborative meetings among all parties;
  - assess and provide the necessary human and financial resources to support the transition process;
  - identify adult and student leaders to help with the transition; and
  - ask students, educators, guidance counselors, parents, and others to evaluate the transition program.[viii]
- Effective junior high school transition strategies encompass
  - developmentally appropriate and academically rigorous learning environments that are flexible, relevant and directly link to real world issues ;
  - opportunities to grow towards independence within a supportive and secure environment; and
  - meaningful relationships and coordinated processes to ensure

continuity in student learning.[ix]

- use an interdisciplinary approach for low-achieving students;
- conduct summer schools, and establish 'jump-start' programs to better prepare incoming students; and
- create teacher support teams and small learning communities.[x]

- High expectations and standards, rigorous instruction and coursework, and support for student success are considered three pillars for adequate transition to life after high school.[xi]

Effective junior high school transition strategies respect students' diverse backgrounds, and provide opportunities for students to succeed academically, grow towards independence, and strengthen their relationships.



- Strategies that facilitate smoother transitions from high school involve helping students
  - develop flexible career plans;
  - manage their changing relationships with parents, teachers and friends;
  - learn how to meet their current and future needs (e.g., need for community, sense of purpose, physical and emotional security, time management);
  - cope with stress by developing competencies such as adaptability, problem solving, and decision making;
  - bridge programs through work experience, co-op education opportunities or post-secondary education entry programs; and
  - acquire and assess career and education information and market trends.[xii]

- Transitions into high school can be eased when both structural and specialized curricula reforms are in place (e.g., extended block schedules, small learning communities led by teams of educators, grade-level schools within schools, after-school programs, and 'catch-up' programs). These changes create more personalized learning environments and increase student engagement. Successful use of these strategies requires community endorsement, institutional support, coaching, and professional development.[xiii]

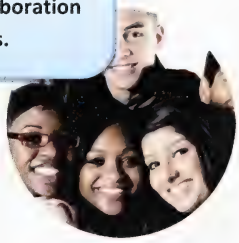
Transitions into high school can be eased when specialized curricula and structural reforms are in place.

- Some high school to work programs are showing early promise (e.g., CAREERS the Next Generation, and the Career Pathways framework, see http://www.cbelearn.ca/pathways); however, more career

pathways need to be created, programs need to be more sustainable and more broadly available, and flexibility and mobility within the learning system need to be enhanced.[xiv]

- The National High School Center recommends the following actions for those responsible for designing policies and programs to prepare students for successful post-secondary transitions:
  - Intervene early, when students are developing their college and career aspirations.
  - Emphasize rigor and high expectations for all students.
  - Provide appropriate counseling and other supports.
  - Integrate strong academic content into career-focused classes.
  - Collaborate with post-secondary institutions, economic development agencies, and employers to help create smoother transitions to college and the workforce.[xv]

Effective high school to post-secondary or employment transition programs are initiated early, emphasize high expectations for all students, provide counseling and supports, integrate a career-focus, and involve collaboration among all stakeholders.



- The Institute of Education Sciences (IES), U.S. Department of Education, recommends several prevention strategies to reduce early school leaving. These strategies could be considered as part of an effective and comprehensive transition support program. IES recommends the following:
  - Use data systems to support the realistic diagnoses of students at risk of not completing high school.
  - Assign adult advocates to at-risk students.
  - Provide academic supports and enrichment opportunities to improve academic achievement.
  - Implement programs that help students improve their behavior and social skills.
  - Personalize the learning environment and instructional practice.
  - Provide rigorous and relevant instruction to engage students.[xvi]

Implementation Strategies

Implementation of school transition strategies or programs may face challenges related to clarifying terminology, establishing and maintaining partnerships, recruiting students, involving parents and the community, coordinating various transition activities, addressing the needs of minority populations, securing financial and human resources, and ensuring supporting policies are in place. Several authors have identified or recommended approaches to implementation that minimize the negative impacts of these challenges (Collins et al, 2009; Bangser, 2008; Chicago Public Schools, 2007; and Charner, 1996).

For example, Collins et al (2009)[xvii] captured the following recommendations from several educators and policy makers involved in implementing a range of school-based and extended learning services:

- Construct programs that complement school goals and academic standards.
- Implement evidence-based, but non-traditional methods of youth development.
- Ensure programs are engaging and diverse.
- Use a variety of recruitment and retention strategies to engage students.
- Provide ongoing training and professional development for educators and other support personnel.
- Establish and maintain positive relationships with all stakeholders.
- Share relevant research results.

Challenges to effective implementation of transition strategies may include

- **clarifying terminology;**
- **establishing and maintaining partnerships;**
- **recruiting students;**
- **involving parents and the community;**
- **coordinating various transition activities;**
- **addressing the needs of minority populations;**
- **securing financial and human resources; and**
- **ensuring supporting policies are in place.**

Bangser (2008)[xviii] outlined several implementation lessons and choices related to the implementation of transitions from high school to post-secondary education and employment. According to Bangser, the three overarching questions that decision-makers need to ask when tailoring transition programs to their local contexts include the following:

- When should interventions start?
- What is the proper balance between broad-based or targeted transitions approaches?
- How comprehensive do the interventions need to be for each student?

Bangser states that answering these questions requires consideration of

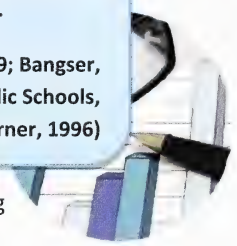
- curriculum and instruction factors;
- the professional development needs of teachers;
- the degree of alignment with expectations from post-secondary institutions and the workplace;
- collaboration among all stakeholders; financial implications;
- data gathering requirements; and
- accountability factors.

Chicago Public Schools (2007)[xix], after adapting resources provided by the UCLA Center for Mental Health in Schools, recommended considering the following key points when establishing transition supports:

- Use a comprehensive approach.
- Involve parents in the transition process.
- Establish connections with community resources.
- Promote information sharing.
- Provide ongoing, continuous transition supports.
- Encourage social development.
- Maintain high expectations and a challenging curriculum.

Successful implementation of transition strategies requires leadership at all levels, family and community involvement, information sharing as well as ongoing professional development and financial support. Programs that encourage lifelong learning and are founded on research have been shown to be successful.

(Collins et al, 2009; Bangser, 2008; Chicago Public Schools, 2007; and Charner, 1996)



Although somewhat dated, Charner (1996)[xx] offers several suggestions for the successful implementation of high school to post-secondary education and work initiatives as follows:

- Provide executive-level leadership that includes developing shared vision, clear goals, and a comprehensive strategy; enlisting support and involvement of all stakeholders; continuous and consistent communication; advocacy and a tolerance for risk; and empowering leaders among those delivering the program (e.g., educators, counselors).
- Provide professional development for teachers and other staff.
- Nurture positive cross-sector collaboration.
- Support the development of student self-determination.
- Integrate demanding academic work with current vocational instruction and work-readiness preparation.
- Provide an integrated career information and guidance system.
- Encourage a commitment to lifelong learning by ensuring career awareness programs are progressive and sequential, begin as early as elementary or middle school, articulate with post-secondary

institutions, and offer a variety of options.

- Employ creative approaches to financing that leverage a variety of diverse sources.
- Draw upon existing research, or conduct or commission research to support implementation.

Charner's report offers several cases studies that highlight practical examples of these critical elements of effective implementation.

Realized Benefits

According to the literature, the following benefits of effective school transition strategies are being realized (Center for Mental Health at UCLA, 2003; Taylor, 2007; Line and Williams, 2007; Bottoms and Young, 2008).

- Successful transition interventions strengthen problem-solving, enhance resilience, make a significant difference in students' motivational readiness for school, enhance students' attitudes about school and self, and improve their academic performance.[xxi]

Successful transition interventions strengthen problem-solving, enhance resilience, make a significant difference in students' motivational readiness for school, enhance students' attitudes about school and self, and improve their academic performance.

- Positive student-student interactions result in supportive friendships that help reduce anxiety, give vent to emotions, and minimize the negative impacts of rumors.
- Vocational training and career education programs positively impact school retention and graduation. They have also shown promise for supporting job placement upon high school completion.[xxii]
- Exposure to work experiences in high school has been linked to greater success in the workforce and in postsecondary education.[xxiii]

Exposure to work experiences in high school has been linked to greater success in the workforce and in postsecondary education.

- Approaches that achieve effective student transitions from high school to college and careers yield improved high school completion rates, improved college preparedness, higher enrolments and persistence in post-secondary education, reduced college remediation rates, and increased entry of students into employment or further education.[xxiv]

PROMISING PRACTICES FROM THE ALBERTA INITIATIVE FOR SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT

Overview

The sixteen AISI projects summarized below demonstrate, to varying degrees, some of the promising practices for managing school transitions that have been or are being implemented in Alberta. These projects include those that support one or more school transitions. They also range from projects that were initiated as far back as 2001 to projects that have only recently completed their first year of implementation. The project summaries are organized by transition focus and include the following information:

- Project Title and ID
- School Authority
- Scope including Student Population and Grade(s)
- Brief Project Description
- Improvement Goals, Strategies and Measures
- Strategies Employed (in more detail)
- Results

Note: Current project synopses can be found by searching the AISI Clearinghouse at https://extranetapp.learning.gov.ab.ca/AISIClearingHouse/Forms/SearchProjects.aspx?CHFileAction=Search&SearchID=1#.

Home-to-School Transitions	Elementary-to-Junior High School Transitions	Junior High School-to-High School Transitions	High School-to-Post-secondary Education and / or Work Transitions
1. Community Collaboration – Edmonton School District No. 7 2. Early Start to ECS – Northland School Division No. 61 3. More for Four – Westwind School Division No. 74 4. Early Intervention: Jump Start Preschool – Chinook's Edge School Division No. 73 5. Improving Preschoolers Literacy and Parents Program – Wild Rose School Division No. 66	1. Building on Student Learning – Canadian Rockies Regional Division No. 1 2. Middle Years Literacy: Elementary Training – Elk Island Public Schools Regional Division No. 14 3. Whatever It Takes: Strategies to Support Struggling Students – Lethbridge School District No. 51 4. Kidscan – Lethbridge School District No. 51	1. Students in Transition Supports – Edmonton Catholic Separate School District No. 7 2. Supporting At-Risk Students – St. Albert Protestant Separate School District No. 6 3. Comprehensive Portfolio System to Enhance Career Development – Grasslands Regional Division No. 6 4. CLC 1 Plugging the Gaps in Transition – Calgary School District No. 19	1. Successful Students via High School Completion – Fort Vermilion School Division No. 52 2. Off-Campus Student Success for At-Risk Students – Calgary Roman Catholic Separate School District No. 1 3. Pyramid of Interventions – Christ the Redeemer Catholic Separate Regional Division No. 3

Analysis

Even though each project was designed to realize local school or school district improvements in terms of managing school transitions, analysis of the multiple strategies employed in these various contexts may reveal approaches that can be adapted or adopted in other school communities in Alberta to effect similar positive results.

Home-to-School Transitions Projects: The promising practices employed in the five profiled home-to-school projects include

- *student screening and ongoing assessment* using a variety of commercially-available instruments (e.g., Brigance Inventory of Early Development; Kaufman Survey of Early Academic and Language Skills (K-SEALS); Clinical Evaluation of Language Fundamentals – Preschool (CELF-P)), locally-developed instruments (e.g., Wild Rose School Division's "Readiness to Learn" instrument), and teacher observations;
- *individualized programming* based on identified student needs, primarily within a preschool setting;
- *speech-language and/or early-literacy development strategies* (e.g., literacy activity centres, speech/language and literacy take-home kits; cross-curricular language/music programming; positive peer modeling);
- *regular meetings of multi-member teams* (i.e., administrators, teachers (pre-K to grade 1), educational assistants, speech language pathologists, preschool supervisors, coordinators);
- *parental involvement strategies* (e.g., workshops, information sessions, newsletters, classroom visitations, distribution of resources and materials for use at home, ongoing communications with parents, family literacy events, parent surveys, student-parent conferences);
- *coordination of and collaboration with various community agencies* (e.g., child and family services agencies, libraries, day cares and day homes, Welcome Wagon, Family and Community Support Services, adult literacy groups, health units, social services); and
- *professional development opportunities* for staff and stakeholders (e.g., in-services, workshops, conferences).

Elementary-to-Junior High School Transitions Projects: The promising practices employed in the four profiled elementary-to-junior high school projects include

- *use of various instructional approaches, with a focus on literacy and numeracy as well as social skills development and community building* (e.g., mentoring and peer tutoring; differentiated instruction; using individualized learning plans; meta-cognition strategies; modeling; using expository text; using leveled resources and materials; reading and writing strategies; follow-up and skill reinforcement with students after program completion; role playing; drama; journal writing; conflict resolution; providing student agendas and related supports; student advisory periods/classes; recognition, volunteer, and character education programs);
- *use of various assessment strategies* (e.g., assessment for learning strategies; collaborative development and use of common benchmarks, rubrics and report cards; teacher observation; Provincial Achievement Tests; task completion tracking);
- *use of various learning settings* (e.g., one-on-one and small group tutoring; instruction in classrooms as well as resource centres; cross-grade groupings; summer camps; community-based arts and athletic events; reinforcement of learning at home with parental support)
- *regular meetings of multi-member teams* (i.e., administrators, teachers , AISI consultants and coordinators, counselors);
- *parental involvement strategies* (e.g., workshops, information sessions, newsletters, distribution of resources and materials for use at home, ongoing communications with parents, parent surveys, student-parent conferences);
- *coordination of and collaboration with various community agencies* (e.g., Kidscan project); and
- *professional development opportunities* for staff and stakeholders (e.g., in-services, workshops, conferences, collaboration via Professional Learning Communities (PLCs)).

Junior High School-to- High School Transitions Projects: The promising practices employed in the four profiled junior high school-to-high school projects include

- *early identification of students at-risk and ongoing monitoring of their progress* (e.g., attendance records, academic performance records, teacher observations, social relationships, cumulative files, electronic databases (e.g., Management Information Group's "School Logic" software modules), exit interviews);
- *career counseling and planning support from grades 9 to 12* (e.g., student and parental notification of high school options in grade 9, school-based and professionally-staffed career centre, mandatory grade 10 portfolio development course, "Career Cruising" modules for grade 12 students, high school and post-secondary visits, Career Fairs);
- *individualized programming* (e.g., Individualized Program Plans (IPPs), individualized transition plans);
- *focused student workshops* (e.g., topics included learning strategies, test taking skills, study skills, communication skills, agenda organization and use, and planning for final);
- *use of differentiated instructional strategies in a variety of learning environments* (e.g., one-on-one tutoring; classes with low pupil-to-teacher ratios; use of in-class aides; self-paced alternative learning environments employing distance learning materials and computer technologies (e.g., St. Albert's teacher-supervised "iLab" program); after school clubs (e.g., "Homework Hotel"));
- *collaboration among feeder and receiving school staffs*;
- *provision of adult advocates, advisors, and/or mentors*;
- *development and use of transition support resources* (e.g., high school completion checklists, "Cumulative Record Card Overviews", "Active Learning Resource Manual", grade 9 high school pre-registration processes);
- *regular meetings of multi-member teams* (i.e., administrators, AISI lead teachers , teacher mentors or advocates, core subject teachers, career counselors);
- *parental involvement strategies* (e.g., workshops, information sessions, newsletters, ongoing communications with parents, parent surveys, student-parent conferences, Parent Advisory Council meetings, "positive phone calls" initiative, use of Management Information Group's web-based "Home Logic" module);
- *coordination of and collaboration with various community agencies* (e.g., South East Partnership for Youth Development, Youth Connections, Entre-corp); and
- *professional development opportunities* for staff and stakeholders (e.g., in-services, workshops, conferences, book studies).

High School-to-Post-secondary Education and/or Employment Transitions Projects: The promising practices employed in the three profiled high school-to-post-secondary education and/or employment projects include

- *career counseling strategies* (e.g., career fairs, guest speakers, use of a Web-based career planning tool (e.g., Career Cruising), one-on-one support from off-campus teachers and a career practitioner, development with students of various career pathways and school completion options);
- *career-related programming* (e.g., mobile Career and Technology Studies trailers; Registered Apprenticeship Program (RAP); work internships; integration of career awareness in other subject areas; career modules; off-campus work experiences and apprenticeship programs);
- *alternative timetabling* (e.g., Copernican model);
- *development and use of consistent division- and school-wide rubrics, exemplars and assessment strategies*;
- *development and use of comprehensive intervention approaches* (e.g., "pyramid of interventions" based on the work of Dufour (2004) and Blankstein (2005), and others);
- *regular meetings of multi-member teams* (i.e., administrators, AISI lead teachers, department heads, counselors, Director of School Completion);
- *parental involvement strategies* (e.g., workshops, information sessions, newsletters, ongoing communications with parents, parent surveys, student-parent conferences, School Council meetings);
- *coordination of and collaboration with various community agencies* (e.g., partnerships with businesses in the community); and
- *professional development opportunities* for staff and stakeholders (e.g., Professional Learning Communities, in-services, workshops, conferences, book studies).

Home to School: Community Collaboration Project

Title / Project ID: Community Collaboration Project (30105)

School Authority: Edmonton School District No. 7 (3020)

Scope: 7079 Students, Grades Pre-K to 9, 30 Schools

Project Description: In order to increase school success for an increasing number of at-risk students, this project set out to maximize available resources by focusing on strategic partnerships among schools, families, and community organizations. Groups of schools, called clusters, collaborated to identify common needs and explore ways to work more effectively with families and community partners, similar to the approach being demonstrated in the City Centre Education Project (CCEP) schools (see http://ccep.epsb.ca/index.htm for more information). This project quickly evolved from working with parents and community partners at the Kindergarten level to school-wide projects that supported all-grade levels.

Five school clusters, comprised of five to eight schools per cluster, were created in areas where significant numbers of students and families with high needs had been identified; namely east, north-central, west, city centre, and Mill Woods areas of Edmonton.

A Cluster Team Coordinator for each school cluster helped principals and teachers identify at-risk students' needs and facilitated collaborative action-planning with key community partners. A Project Leadership Team (PLT), comprised of Cluster Team Coordinators, representative principals and teachers from the five school clusters as well as central office staff with expertise in the areas of student achievement, programs and planning, Aboriginal education, and English language learning, provided overall project direction. The PLT focused on understanding the needs and challenges emerging through the collaborative work of schools and community partners and examining the implications for the district.

Principals, teachers and community partners in each school cluster identified common needs for at-risk students, determined how to work together to more effectively meet identified needs, and held professional development sessions to support their work (e.g., sessions focused on effective needs analysis, strategies for collaboration and sharing, and discussing needs with social workers from Neighbourhood and Community Development, City of Edmonton, and Community Initiatives, Child and Family Services Region 6).

Improvement Goals, Strategies, and Measures

Goals	Strategies	Measures
1. Increase school success for students who are at risk. 2. Increase collaboration among schools, families, and community partners. 3. Increase the district's capacity to collaborate effectively with community partners.	• School and community partners collaborated to increase their understanding of students' needs as well as their access to supports for these students and their families. • Schools organized themselves into clusters to identify students' and families' needs and determine how resources can be used more strategically. • Project information was shared with other schools in the district.	• Qualitative information and student success stories from students, parents, and community partners. • Quantitative measures including High Level of Achievement Tests (HLATs) and teacher-awarded marks. • Student, parent and community partner survey and focus group feedback. • Number of school clusters sustained after project completion.

Strategies Employed

- *School Organization*: Geographically-based School Clusters were established in areas of high student and family need.
- *Project Management/Coordination*: Cluster Team Coordinators and the Project Leadership Team identified students' and families' needs and worked collaboratively and strategically with community partners to address these needs.
- *Community Involvement*: Schools collaborated with community partners to identify common needs for at-risk students, determine how to work together to more effectively meet identified needs, and hold professional development sessions to support their work.

Results

1. At-risk students were more engaged, as indicated by increased attendance, more participation in classroom activities, higher levels of concentration during teacher-led discussion, increased completion of student assignments, and decreases in negative student behaviour.
2. Significant increases in collaboration between schools and community partners were noted (e.g., more collaborative planning for professional development, increased sharing of resources among cluster schools).
3. Best practice strategies are being used in classrooms.
4. Community partners and schools have adopted a new paradigm for sharing responsibility for high school completion.

Home-to-School: Early Start to ECS Project

Title / Project ID: Early Start to Early Childhood Services (ECS) (10302)

School Authority: Northland School Division No. 61 (1280)

Scope: 120 Students, Grades Pre-K to K, 1 School

Project Description: This project provided a Pre-ECS Program to prospective students in the year prior to entering the St. Theresa ECS Program. This program

- provided a range of experiences for children who may not otherwise have had preschool experiences including opportunities for socialization and interaction with teachers and children in small and large group settings;
- familiarized prospective students with teachers and the school environment, including school routines and expectations;
- provided opportunities to identify children who may experience difficulty with the Kindergarten program;
- organized necessary supports prior to school entry for those students who may need intervention to be successful;
- provided teachers and administration with information to form more equitable groupings for instruction; and
- exposed parents to a variety of ways they can help prepare their children for ECS by providing follow up and support materials/activities for children at home.

Improvement Goals, Strategies, and Measures

Goals	Strategies	Measures
1. To improve student readiness for ECS entry.	• Five classroom visits for children were scheduled, with the first two visits to be accompanied by parents. • Fall and spring parent meetings were held and positive links were developed between parents and the school community. • School personnel conducted individual student conferences, including pre- and post-testing, and provided parent handouts after each student session. • Parent handouts and learning and emergent reading materials were distributed during parent meetings. • Follow-up and support materials/activities were provided for use at home, including strategies for parents to help prepare their children for ECS. • Teacher-student socialization and interaction opportunities were offered in small and large group settings. • A variety of experiences for those students who have not attended preschool were provided. • Students were given exposure to teachers and the school environment, including school routines and expectations. • Children who might experience difficulties with the Kindergarten program were identified. • Necessary supports were provided prior to school entry for those students who may need intervention to be successful. • Teachers and administration were provided with the information needed to form equitable groups for instruction.	• Brigance scores (see http://www.curriculumassociates.com/products/BrigianceOverview.asp for more information). • Surveys. • Number of students and parents served by ECS program. • Anecdotal and observational data.

Strategies Employed

- *Instructional Strategies:* Classroom activities were reinforced with supportive home activities (five monthly take-home bags) and the use of a daily event planner. Classroom activities included crafts; story reading; lessons on sharing; introductions to letters, numbers and shapes; and playing at the water table.
- *Student Assessment Strategies:* Brigance screening, other forms of assessment (e.g., teacher observations related to book awareness, awareness of shapes and colours, and degree of enthusiasm for books), and attendance records were used to monitor students' progress and levels of confidence during the program.
- *Project Management/Coordination Strategies:* A local coordinator contacted parents, scheduled parental and team meetings and testing sessions, prepared take-home bags, encouraged regular attendance, and assisted teachers in lesson planning and student testing. ECS teachers provided four 1 ½ hour sessions per day, once per month. The grade 1 transition teacher planned and coordinated the overall project and assisted with student testing. The coordinator, ECS teachers and the grade 1 teacher met weekly to discuss strategies and to monitor progress toward project goals.
- *Professional Development Strategies:* Professional development was provided in the form of early literacy workshops as well as awareness and support in the adaptation of early start programs in use elsewhere in Canada. Parents were provided with several strategies to help their children at home.
- *Parental Involvement Strategies:* The project was broadly communicated within the community (e.g., poster, newspaper advertisements, letters to parents, parent information sessions). Parental involvement was mandatory. Parental contact was maintained and parental feedback was solicited throughout the project. Resources and supports were provided to parents to reinforce what was being learned in the classroom.

Results

1. Participation in the ECS program steadily increased over the three years that is was offered.
2. Teachers noted better literacy skills for those students who used the "early start" materials provided. Pre- and post-Brigance screens showed that regular attendance improved students' scores more than for those students who did not attend regularly.
3. Students' social skills were enhanced through exposure to classroom settings (e.g., students' interactions were positive). Students were more aware of classroom routines, rules and consequences.
4. Listening, cooperation, socialization, expressive language, and direction-following skills improved among students.
5. Early identification of special education needs and speech difficulties allowed the school to more adequately prepare for school entry.
6. The Early Start to ECS project has been adapted for use in several schools within the district. Consideration is being given to offering sessions in the evening for those parents unable to attend during the day.
7. Positive links between parents and the school community were developed.

Home-to-School: More for Four Project

Title / Project ID: More for Four (10349)

School Authority: Westwind School Division No. 74 (0056)

Scope: 200 Students, Grade Pre-K, 7 Schools

Project Description: This project was developed to improve student achievement by providing effective speech/language services for pre-K children, their parents and staff within a supportive literacy-rich environment. Various strategies were employed to achieve this goal as follows:

- Parent and Staff Professional Development: involved parent workshops (e.g., "Make and Take Nights"); workshops conducted by speech/language pathologists; literacy/language fairs; and the distribution of "Speech language bags."
- Speech/Language Pathologist Services: included speech language centres; ongoing student assessment; and consultation with staff and parents.
- Screening and Early Identification of Children with Mild/Moderate Speech/Language Delays
- Pre-K Program: offered two half-days each week; staffed by a certified teacher; involved regular consultation with a speech/language pathologist; and integrated language centres into the pre-K curriculum.
- Speech/Language Enrichment for K-4 FNMI Students

Improvement Goals, Strategies, and Measures

Goals	Strategies	Measures
1. All pre-K students will be exposed to quality language experiences. 2. Students' speech/language needs will be more accurately diagnosed for early intervention. 3. Students with mild/moderate speech/language delays will have increased access to speech language intervention at home and at school. 4. Parents will participate more appropriately in their child's speech/ language development. 5. Pre-K staff and speech pathologists will collaborate for more effective program planning for pre-K students. 6. Pre-K students without speech/language delays will act as role models for those children with speech/language delays. 7. Children will demonstrate an improvement in the areas of vocabulary, and expressive and receptive language.	• A speech language pathologist was hired to inservice parents and teachers in the areas of speech/language. • The FNMI liaison worker partnered with program directors and pre-k teachers to assess the professional development needs of FNMI parents in the area of speech/language. • Speech/language activity kits were used as a bridge between home and school. • Pre-k activities were formulated by a speech language pathologist and the pre-K teacher. • Literacy-rich environments were created by certificated teachers. • A program based on the "High Scope Curriculum" with speech/language enrichment was offered 2 half-days per week. • Speech/language centers were developed by the speech language pathologist and pre-k teacher. • Pre- and post-tests involving quantitative measures were used to assess vocabulary and expressive and receptive language improvement.	• K-SEALS tests (Kaufman Survey of Early Academic and Language Skills) and CELF-P subtests (Clinical Evaluation of Language Fundamentals – Preschool) were administered as pre-tests in September and as post-tests at the end of the year to identify mild/moderate speech/language delays and individual student growth respectively (see http://www.pearsonassessments.com/kseals.aspx and for more information about K-SEALS). • Brigance Inventory of Early Development II (IED-II) was also used. • Degree of satisfaction with speech/language professional development was assessed using parent and teacher surveys.

Strategies Employed

- *Instructional Strategies*:
  - Teachers developed speech/language programming based on the individual needs of students with age-appropriate milestones in mind. Inclusive, literacy-rich environments were created and students without speech/language delays served as role models. Class size varied from 5 to 16 students.
  - Multi-modal speech/language kits were developed and distributed monthly to support classroom instruction and student learning.
  - Cross-curricular language/music programming was developed by preschool supervisors in collaboration with a music specialist. This program targeted concepts such as speech patterns, inflections, compound words, complex rhythms, timbre patterns, movement and sound.
  - Mid-year preschool speech/language screening was offered to prospective students and their parents.
  - Speech language pathologists, teachers and educational assistants consulted each other on programming on an ongoing basis. Educational assistants and speech language pathologists reviewed the progress of children on a regular basis.
- *Project Management/Coordination*: Part-time preschool supervisors regularly monitored, supported and collaborated with preschool teachers (e.g., together they developed and wrote Individualized Program Plans (IPPs), conducted meetings with students, collected data on program effectiveness, consulted bi-monthly on "best practices"). Supervisors met 3 times during the year to discuss and address program enhancements.
- *Student Assessment Strategies*: Assessment strategies included mid-year or start-of-year preschool speech/language screening for prospective students or enrolled students respectively, K-SEALS pre- and post-tests for all students, and CELF-P pre- and post-subtests for those students with identified speech/language delays. Speech/language growth was monitored regularly during pre-K and assessed in June. Results were shared with the receiving Kindergarten teachers. The Brigance Inventory of Early Development II (IED-II) was also used to support student assessment.
- *Professional Development Strategies*: Preschool teachers and educational assistants participated in professional development on an ongoing basis as needed. Speech language pathologists provided formal and job-embedded professional learning opportunities on an ongoing basis. An annual full-day preschool conference was held targeting areas of concern raised by project participants. A music specialist provided monthly in-services on developing early literacy and language skills through music and movement.
- *Parental Involvement Strategies*: Parental participation was encouraged through attendance at IPP meetings; use of "Book Bag Program" books and activities with their children at home; rotational classroom volunteer opportunities; attendance at workshops which focused on speech/language through literature, music, and hands-on activities; receipt of preschool newsletters, use of customized "Speech Bags" which offered specific strategies designed by speech language pathologists for use at home; and receipt of a new report card designed to guide parents in planning developmentally appropriate activities.

Results

1. 68% of the children improved in the areas of vocabulary, and expressive and receptive language as indicated on pre- and post-tests.
2. 82% of parents were "more than satisfied" with the pre-literary skills taught through the program and commented on the value of the in-services as well as the impact of positive peer modeling to their children's development. Parent awareness of developmental stages of pre-school children has increased as has their active role in stimulating their children's speech/language growth. Parent demand for preschool programming has increased.
3. Speech/language delivery methods and direct services have increased with the increase in private speech language pathologists. Assessments are conducted more quickly with the increase in frequency of direct therapy sessions.
4. Mid-year preschool speech/language screening improved the process of early identification of developmental delays as well as the planning for follow-up assessments and programming.
5. Ongoing consultation between speech language pathologists, teachers and educational assistants and ongoing student progress assessments by educational assistants and speech language pathologists enhanced the speech/language program and allowed for optimal individualized programming to meet students' specific needs.
6. The percentage of preschool children requiring speech/language funding (under Alberta Education's guidelines) upon exiting the preschool program has been significantly reduced.
7. Preschool students exhibited tolerance, understanding and acceptance of each other.
8. Kindergarten teachers observed increased self-confidence, knowledge of pre-literacy skills, socialization skills, and emerging problem solving skills among those incoming students who attended the preschool program.
9. Increased collaboration occurred among preschool, Kindergarten, and grade 1 teachers.

Note: Another preschool literacy project involving 180 students in 7 schools in the Westwind School Division used similar strategies and reported comparable results. For more information, see the project synopsis and the project plan by searching the AISI Clearinghouse at https://extranetapp.learning.gov.ab.ca/AISIClearingHouse/Forms/SearchProjects.aspx?CHFileAction=Search&SearchID=1#.

Home-to-School: Early Intervention: Jump Start Preschool Project

Title / Project ID: Early Intervention: Jump Start Preschool (10601)

School Authority: Chinook's Edge School Division No. 73 (0053)

Scope: 12 Students, Grade Pre-K, 1 School

Project Description: This project set out to establish a model for bridging the language and literacy gap in a small rural community. Students of preschool age who were considered "at-risk" for literacy were selected based on parent interviews. These students participated in a program which offered early literacy skill interventions three mornings each week, to which parents were invited. Parents were also invited to attend literacy workshops.

Improvement Goals, Strategies, and Measures

Goals	Strategies	Measures
1. To improve the literacy and language skills of preschool children identified as "at risk." 2. To enhance parental, teacher and community understanding of the importance of reading. 3. To address the reading and language needs of a small rural community.	• A "Jump Start Program" using the "Jolly Phonics Program" was offered 3 mornings per week for no more than 12 children. See http://www.scholarschoice.ca/category.aspx?iZoneUID=2&iAgeUID=22&iCategoryUID=13814&clr=0&sa=0 for more information. • Students were immersed in age-appropriate literacy activities. • Parents were provided with opportunities to attend in-services about supporting literacy at home and were invited to participate in the preschool classroom. • Division-level early literacy meetings were held to support pre-K to grade 2 teachers.	• Students were tracked over three years to determine the efficacy of the literacy interventions. Assessments measured letter/sound recognition, phonemic awareness, and rhyming skills.

Strategies Employed

- *Instructional Strategies*: The "Jump Start Program" encouraged, modeled and supported the development of early literacy among 4 and 5 year old children. Developed by Sue Lloyd, the "Jolly Phonics Program" focused on building phonemic awareness skills. This program was offered three times per week and incorporated multiple-intelligence-based instructional strategies (e.g., consistent visual, auditory and kinesthetic activities including picture friezes, body actions, books, oral stories, diverse centres, songs, finger plays, and rhythmic games).
- *Project Management/Coordination*: An Early Intervention team consisting of two Kindergarten teachers, three educational assistants, and one Jump Start / Early Literacy teacher shared ideas, materials, and strategies supported the preschool, Kindergarten, early literacy Kindergarten and grade one programs. Occupational and physical therapy were provided by one educational assistant. The second educational assistant provided one-on-one assistance where needed. The third educational assistant worked with the speech language pathologist and provided additional support for children with communication delays.
- *Student Assessment Strategies*: Student assessments were informal and employed checklists and nursery rhyme games.
- *Professional Development Strategies*: Sessions attended included the International Reading Conference (Calgary, 2005), an Assessment for Learning workshop (Calgary, 2005), a Strategies for Special Needs Students in the

Regular Classroom – K-9 workshop (Innisfail, 2006), and a workshop on How to Effectively Manage Kids' Behaviour (Innisfail, 2006).

- *Parental Involvement Strategies*: Parental involvement was encouraged on an ongoing basis through informal mini-sessions, telephone conversations, newsletters, games, activities, and information sheets.

Results

1. Positive growth was demonstrated in all student learning measures.
2. Parental awareness of project goals and programming contributed to their continued learning.

Home-to-School: Literacy and Parents Program

Title / Project ID: Literacy and Parents Program (598)

School Authority: Wild Rose School Division No. 66 (1325)

Scope: 2100 Students, Grades Pre-K to K, 12 Schools

Project Description: The Literacy and Parents (LAP) Program was established to develop and enrich the language and literacy opportunities for children (infancy to age 5) prior to kindergarten. This parent awareness program involved teachers, parents, preschool children, community agencies and the school community working together to create experiences where children build their language and early literacy knowledge about letters and sounds, print and pictures, and words and sentences.

The LAP Program is a unique program that is broad in scope but narrow in focus, which is to develop and enhance the opportunities for all children. Its success lies heavily on the ongoing support and commitment of community agencies in the Wild Rose School Division. The key strategy is to raise parent and public awareness of the importance of early literacy.

Improvement Goals, Strategies, and Measures

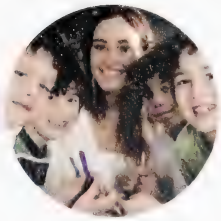
Goals	Strategies	Measures
1. To work with parents, preschool children, community agencies and the school community to develop early literacy dispositions in children and thereby help to ensure their readiness for success upon entering school.	• "Little Tykes Fun Festivals," "Parent/Child Development" sessions and a "Story Time Program" were offered to engage families, to promote and nurture a child's connection with the school community early in life, and to enhance literacy and language learning in the home (e.g., reading, use of "Once Upon a Rhyme" activities based on the "Mother Goose Program" and the "Kindermusik Program" (see http://www.nald.ca/mothergooseprogram/About.htm and http://www.kindermusik.com/ for more information about these programs)). • A "Readiness to Learn" measurement (benchmark standards checklist/pamphlet) was distributed to parents via community agencies that helped to identify key skill areas and abilities necessary for success in kindergarten. This "instrument" was designed locally and administered to all incoming ECS students in September. • Opportunities were provided to expectant mothers (neo-natal clinic) and teen mothers (high school) to help them learn about children's early literacy development. • Parents had access to a "lending library" of current resources (videos/books) which deal with reading, language, and literacy and the important role parents play. • An extensive advertising and communication campaign involving multiple agencies (e.g., Welcome Wagon, Day Cares, Day Homes, Adult Literacy, Family and Community Support Services, Library, Health Units, Social Services) focused on how parents could enhance literacy, language and learning in the home (e.g., "Growing and Learning Cards" were distributed that focused on communication, language and speech; physical skills and well-being; literacy; and the value of play).	• Parent surveys of "literacy behaviors" in the home. • Parent evaluations of Parent/Child Development sessions. • Participation rates of parents and children at literacy activities/events. • Baseline and progress tracking data from the "Readiness to Learn" instrument.

Strategies Employed

- *Instructional Strategies*: Resources including a variety of simple literacy activities that could be replicated in the home were shared at various events and distributed to parents by the school and participating community agencies.
- *Student Assessment Strategies*: A "Readiness to Learn" instrument was developed to assess students' incoming skills and progress.
- *Professional Development Strategies*: Professional development focused on providing parents and the community with information and resources via literacy programs, events, workshops and media coverage.
- *Parental Involvement Strategies*: Parent workshops that incorporated hands-on activities, such as the "Rhymes That Bind" and "Books Offer Our Kids Success (BOOKS)" sessions, provided parents with opportunities to become engaged.

Results

1. Community partners are more aware of and committed to their role in promoting early literacy.
2. Parents are more aware of their important role in creating a "literacy environment" in the home and the skills expected of children upon entering the school system.
3. Kindergarten teachers are using the "Readiness to Learn" data to inform individualized student programming.



Elementary-to-Junior High School: Building on Student Learning Project

Title / Project ID: Building on Student Learning (30166)

School Authority: Canadian Rockies Regional Division No. 12 (3065)

Scope: 2300 Students, Grades K to 12, 7 Schools

Project Description: This AISI Cycle 3 district-wide project set out to "examine and improve the effect of transitions on student achievement and performance" with a focus on grades 1 to 9 literacy and writing (English language arts), grade 9 mathematics, and high school completion. Efforts centered on identifying and implementing several grade-to-grade and school-to-school transition strategies as well as instructional strategies that addressed gender-specific needs.

School Project Teams (SPTs), consisting of a 0.2 FTE Lead AISI teacher, an administrator and selected teachers and parents, were responsible for project implementation. Cross-grade and cross-school Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) were the vehicles through which teachers developed transition strategies, differentiated instructional strategies, and assessment strategies.

Elementary, middle and high schools in the district implemented school-specific initiatives. For example, elementary teachers focused on the collaborative development of benchmarks and rubrics related to literacy skills, as well as developed a common report card. Middle schools focused on writing skills and assessment. High schools focused on developing positive and caring school cultures and school-community-industry partnerships.

Improvement Goals, Strategies, and Measures

Goals	Strategies	Measures
1. To improve student learning and performance for all students a. through seamless transitions from grade to grade and school to school; b. with a focus on English language arts and mathematics achievement; and c. through regular attendance and high school completion. 2. All students will be able to articulate, demonstrate and improve upon the qualities of an active and caring community member.	• Common benchmarks, "assessment for learning" tools, and classroom-based instructional strategies including gender-based instruction were developed and shared. • Other strategies included mentoring, cross-grade groups, grade level district meetings, and the development of a common report card. • Strategies included mentor programs, student council development, recognition programs in all schools, volunteer programs, and character education programs.	• Provincial Achievement Tests (PATs) and high school completion rates. • Circulation volume of teacher professional development resources. • Student, parent and teacher surveys. • Student focus group results. • Common report card in place by September 2009. • Student attendance records. • Participation rates in high school activities. • Administration observations.

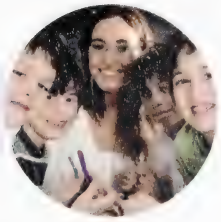
Strategies Employed

- *Instructional and Student Assessment Strategies:* Staff focused on the use of "assessment for learning" strategies with increased involvement of students. A common report card was developed for use in the elementary grades.
- *Project Management/Coordination Strategies:* School project teams, consisting of a lead AISI teacher (0.2 FTE per school), an administrator and teachers, were responsible for project implementation. The lead AISI teacher was responsible for the action research component of the project and liaised with the district AISI coordinator.

- *Professional Development Strategies:* Professional Learning Communities and related professional development activities have occurred (e.g., sessions included those focused on developing leadership capacity, using assessment for learning strategies). Weekly meetings were preferred over half-day sessions.
- *Parental Involvement Strategies:* Communications with and among all stakeholders were facilitated through school showcases, newsletters and presentations.

Results

1. Continued improvements in the areas of high school transitions and high school completion.
2. Increased involvement in self-assessment by students.
3. Continued development of communities of practice (e.g., French as a Second Language team, writing focus team, cross-divisional teams) has increased collaboration among teachers (e.g., collaboratively planned lessons, development of common rubrics and exemplars, sharing of best practices).



Elementary-to-Junior High School: Middle Years Literacy – Elementary Training Project

Title / Project ID: Middle Years Literacy – Elementary Training (478)

School Authority: Elk Island Public Schools Regional Division No. 14 (2195)

Scope: 26 Students, Grades 4 to 6, 26 Schools

Project Description: The aim of this project was to improve reading and writing among at-risk middle-years students by providing them with one-on-one literacy tutorials (50 fourty-minute sessions) by trained elementary teachers.

Improvement Goals, Strategies, and Measures

Goals	Strategies	Measures
1. To maximize literacy interventions for "at risk" students in grades 4-6, specifically targeting word recognition, comprehension, spelling and student self-monitoring of reading and writing. 2. To support ongoing professional development of teachers including training related to the Middle Years Literacy program. 3. To increase parental involvement in their children's home reading and literacy programs.	• A three-day middle years literacy inservice session was offered that focused on literacy strategies (e.g., meta-cognition strategies, modeling, reading to students, using expository text) for regular and special education classrooms as well as small group learning assistance situations. • Highly structured and individualized one-on-one tutorials were provided to at-risk students using leveled materials and resources. Where staffing constraints did not allow for one-on-one tutorials, teachers modified the program for use with small groups. • Parents were expected to commit to supporting their children's learning at home.	• Pre-tests and post-tests using an informal reading inventory (assessment of reading fluency, comprehension, word recognition and summary writing). • Student, parent, and teacher tutorial evaluation surveys. • Student progress tracking 6-12 months after completion of the tutorial using an informal reading test.

Strategies Employed

- *Instructional Strategies:* Highly structured and individualized one-on-one tutorials or small group learning assistance were provided to at-risk students using leveled materials and resources. Middle years students tutored younger students, thereby reinforcing their learning. Teachers met with small groups of students after completion of the program to help them maintain their learning gains and reinforce their application of the reading and writing strategies.
- *Project Management/Coordination Strategies*: A consultant was hired to develop the program and provide teacher training and inservice during the first two years of the program. Trained facilitators provided training in year three. A district AISI consultant provided support to teachers by networking, ordering resources, tracking the progress of the project, coaching, providing professional development and assisting with program development.
- *Professional Development Strategies*: In addition to attending a three-

day middle years literacy inservice, teachers networked regularly to share successes, discuss and solve problems, share resources and best practices. Focused best practice sessions were also held (e.g., 6+1 Writing Traits and Reading in Content Areas).

- *Parental Involvement Strategies:* Parents were required to ensure their children read 25 minutes each evening. Reading and writing strategies were shared with parents to help them support their children's learning at home. Parents were informed of their child's progress and invited to complete a questionnaire upon completion of the program. They were asked to describe their perceptions of their children's progress and indicate how they planned to continue to support their children's learning at home.

Results

1. Students' reading fluency, comprehension and writing improved by one or more school years. Students' literacy gains were sustained one year after their completion of the tutorials, and in several cases, their performance continued to show improvement. In-class achievement of these students also improved, as did student behaviour and self-confidence. The greatest gains were realized by those students involved in the one-on-one tutorials. These realized benefits increased the commitment and dedication of those involved.
2. Students, teachers and parents reported 100% satisfaction with the program.

Elementary-to-Junior High School: Whatever it Takes: Strategies to Support Struggling Students Project

Title / Project ID: Whatever It Takes: Strategies to Support Struggling Students (32376)

School Authority: Lethbridge School District No. 51 (3040)

Scope: 750 Students, Grades 6 to 8, 2 Schools

Project Description: The purpose of this project was to address the academic needs of struggling middle school students by providing them with individualized, differentiated instruction in-class as well as access to resource centre supports. At Gilbert Paterson Middle School, the project involved offering optional periods to students requiring extra support in mathematics and language arts, soliciting parental support, and instituting a brief end-of-day agenda period with homeroom teachers. At Wilson Middle School, the project involved offering technology-mediated support through the REACH program and instituting an advisory program.

Improvement Goals, Strategies, and Measures

Goals	Strategies	Measures
1. To improve student achievement primarily in math, language arts, science, and social studies. 2. To improve student's completion of tasks. 3. To improve students' self-concept related to school success.	• Resource centres and computer technologies were made available to students who were struggling academically. • Teachers and parents were offered inservice opportunities to increase their awareness and use of various strategies to support struggling students (e.g., differentiated instruction, parental support strategies). • Students were involved in end-of-day agenda periods or advisory periods where teachers worked with students to update their agendas, and provide feedback and support. Teachers also used this time to improve communications with parents.	• Provincial Achievement Test scores in math and English language arts. • Student, teacher and parent surveys. • Report card grades. • Task completion records. • Frequency of access to special services. • Monitoring of growth in teacher practice through the District Growth, Supervision, and Evaluation Policy.

Strategies Employed

- *Instructional Strategies:* Differentiated instructional strategies, with a focus on literacy, were used in classrooms and resource centres. The resource centres involved smaller class sizes and offered students extra time to complete learning tasks, pre-teaching opportunities, and access to technology in a stress-free environment. Teachers met regularly to reflect on their philosophies and those instructional strategies that proved successful.
- *Professional Development Strategies:* Teachers focused on building their repertoire of differentiated instructional strategies.
- *Parental Involvement Strategies:* Parents were informed and consulted at School Council meetings and parent-teacher conferences and involved through ongoing communications with teachers.

Results

1. Results for Gilbert Paterson Middle School: 18% of the 57 students taking the Math Paterson Academic Support System (PASS) program increased their grade by 5% or more. 34% of the 56 students taking the Language Arts PASS program increased their grade by 5% or more.
2. Results for Wilson Middle School: 25.4% of students increased their Math grades by 5% or more. 26.9% of students increased their Language Arts grades by 5% or more.

Elementary-to-Junior High School: Kidscan Project

Title / Project ID: Kidscan (6809)

School Authority: Lethbridge School District No. 51 (3040)

Scope: 32 Students, Grades 5 to 6, 11 Schools

Project Description: The purpose of this project was to assist grade 5 students in their transition to middle school by improving their social skills and raising their self-esteem. Pre-middle school students identified as "at-risk" in terms of their lack of confidence, self-esteem and assertiveness participated in a week-long day camp during the summer. *Note*: This project was established to support grade reconfiguration from junior high to middle school within the district. Although the camps are no longer being offered, participants indicated that the project proved to be a useful approach to helping students acquire and practice important social skills.

Improvement Goals, Strategies, and Measures

Goals	Strategies	Measures
1. To improve students' successful transition to middle school by a. providing social skills training; b. teaching specific cognitive behavioural strategies; c. involving parents as co-learners and coaches through at-home social skills development activities; d. helping students reduce their likelihood of falling victim to bullying, isolation, marginalization or social withdrawal; e. helping students reduce their likelihood of developing anxiety, depression or low self-esteem; f. enhancing students' competencies in assertiveness, problem-solving, conflict resolution, decision making, school achievement, and interpersonal and communication skills.	• Individualized learning plans were developed for each child to address identified social skill deficits. • A variety of social skill development and community building strategies were employed during a week-long summer camp including – role playing; – drama; – journal writing; – community-based arts and athletic events; – integrating social skills in real-life community settings; and – practicing skills at home and in the community. • Parent involvement was encouraged through information sessions, homework assignments, and a late summer follow-up session to review socialization skills.	• Attendance records and homework checks. • Counselor observations of individual student's participation. • Pre- and post-tests using Piers Harris Children's Self-Concept Scale and social skills checklists. (See a review of the Piers Harris tool by Alberta's Community-University Partnership for the Study of Children, Youth, and Families (2007) at http://www.cup.ualberta.ca/view-document/83-tool-review-piers-harris-chidlren-s-self-concept-scale-2nd-ed. • Parent and student satisfaction surveys.

Strategies Employed

- *Instructional Strategies*: A team teaching approach was used where each counselor prepared a designated part of the curriculum. Daily topics included communication styles, building respect, dealing with conflict and were practiced in community-based social situations.
- *Project Management/Coordination Strategies*: Kidscan counselors worked with a counseling consultant and the AISI coordinator to develop the program and activities.
- *Professional Development Strategies*: Counselors participated in an Art Therapy workshop that provided them with experiences similar to the activities offered at the camp (e.g., mask making).

- *Parental Involvement Strategies:* Parental involvement was mandated. Parents participated in an information session, met with counselors, provided comments on daily homework assignments, and attended a student showcase on the last day of camp.

Results

1. Students reported improved self-esteem and increased abilities to make friends.
2. Students and families gained valuable knowledge and skills that better enabled them to address their needs (e.g., developed personal and community contacts, learned how to access recreational activities that enhance student learning).

Junior High School-to-High School: Students in Transition Supports Project

Title / Project ID: Students in Transition Supports (30056)

School Authority: Edmonton Catholic Separate School District No. 7 (0110)

Scope: 25500 Students, Grades 8 to 12, 27 Schools

Project Description: This project was initiated to support student transitions from grade 9 to 10, to support students re-entering mainstream high schools after participating in Outreach and grade 9.5 (GAP) programs, and to improve high school completion.

Improvement Goals, Strategies, and Measures

Goals	Strategies	Measures
1. Increase the number of students who transition into high school. 2. Increase 3year high school completion rates. 3. Increase the percentage of students transitioning from Outreach to traditional high schools. 4. Increase the percentage of second year grade nine students in Outreach (grade 9.5) who transition successfully to traditional high schools. 5. Increase the percentage of third year non-completers who enter into an appropriate fourth year completion program.	• Grade 8 & 9 students who may be at risk for not completing or unsuccessfully transitioning to high school were identified. • Junior High AISI representatives established positive relationships with identified students and acted as advocates for these students; monitored attendance and course completion; assisted teachers with differentiated instruction and program adjustments; worked with teachers to develop transition plans for all identified grade 9 students, and liaised with high school AISI reps to create and implement student transition plans. • Collaboration between the junior and senior high schools was strengthened through monthly joint professional development for Junior and Senior High AISI reps.	• Percentage of students who transition into high school. • Student surveys (e.g., identify numbers of students who express a sense of belonging). • Percentage of students who complete high school in 3 years. • Percentage of students who transition from Outreach and grade 9.5 (GAP) programs to traditional high schools. • Percentage of third-year non-completing students who enter into an appropriate fourth year completion program. • Migration patterns of students within the district.

Strategies Employed

- *Instructional Strategies:*

Junior high to high school transitions: Students requiring transition supports were identified by examining attendance records, course grades, and anecdotal data from teachers as well as seeking further assessments when required and reviewing students' files in detail. As the strategy evolved, AISI representatives and advisors also applied for special education programs when necessary. Transition plans were developed for each identified student and students received support from on-site AISI representatives. Transition planning began early in the school year (e.g., students and their parents were apprised of high school options near the end of the first reporting period in grade 9). Junior high school and high school AISI representatives worked together to identify and plan appropriate programs for students requiring transition support. Students visited high schools and met with the high school AISI representatives prior to registration.

High school completion: High school AISI representatives used an in-house developed high school completion checklist to ensure students had the requirements to graduate. Exit interviews were held with all students who withdrew or transferred. Letters were written to non-completing grade 12 students informing them of their options for completion. "Career Cruising" modules were explored (see http://www.careercruising.com/ for more information).

- *Project Management/Coordination Strategies*: Junior high and high school AISI representatives and Outreach representatives met regularly.
- *Professional Development Strategies*: AISI representatives participated in joint professional development activities involving experts including Dr. Martin Brokenleg (http://www.vst.edu/faculty/brokenleg.php), Dr. Steve Edwards (http://realityedservices.com/staff.html) and Dr. Gord Neufeld (http://www.gordonneufeld.com/).
- *Parental Involvement Strategies:* Students and their parents were apprised of high school options near the end of the first reporting period in grade 9.

Results

1. The percentage and quality of student transitions from junior high school to high school improved.
2. The strategy used to identify students requiring transition support was considered successful.
3. Three year high school completion rates improved.
4. Student advocacy by AISI representatives has helped to change the culture of some schools.
5. The percentage of students transitioning from Outreach and grade 9.5 programs to traditional high schools have yet to show improvement.

Junior High School-to-High School: Supporting At-Risk Students Project

Title / Project ID: Supporting At-Risk Students (30002)

School Authority: St. Albert Protestant Separate School District No. 6 (7020)

Scope: 3532 Students, Grades 7 to 12, 5 Schools

Project Description: This project was initiated to help teachers develop the supports needed by academically, socially and/or emotionally at-risk students in order that these students might

- experience success in terms of their transitions from elementary to junior high school to high school;
- have access to coordinated community services; and
- complete high school.

Improvement Goals, Strategies, and Measures

Goals	Strategies	Measures
1. Increase achievement of at-risk students in language arts, science, mathematics and social studies through the use of a broad range of diverse strategies. 2. Enhance parental communication and involvement to the benefit of all students.	• Strategies to increase achievement included attendance initiatives, tutorials, peer-tutoring, "Save One Student" initiatives, mentoring, and differentiated instruction. • Strategies to broaden teachers' instructional practice included professional development, collaboration and sharing, and team teaching. • Strategies to enhance parental communication and involvement included parent workshops, professional development, collaboration, and the use of multiple strategies for assessment and reporting.	• Provincial Achievement Tests (percentage meeting acceptable standard). • Pre- and post-tests to determine teacher growth in terms of the variety of teaching/learning strategies being used. • Student and parent surveys. • Attendance records and feedback from parent workshops.

Strategies Employed

- *Instructional Strategies:* Instructional practices varied among schools as illustrated by the examples described below. One school implemented an iLab program, where students who were experiencing academic difficulties in one or more subjects but were not candidates for an Outreach program, were provided with an alternative learning environment involving the use of distance learning modules with teacher assistance. Students and teachers collaborated on learning timelines and parents were contacted regularly regarding their child's progress. The program had clear student referral procedures, helped to develop caring teacher-student and student-student relationships as well as a sense of community, and provided opportunities to celebrate student successes. The iLab program was supported by a steering committee that met each semester to review participant feedback, and monthly AISI meetings with district lead teachers.

  Another school implemented a student mentorship program where 40 students who had been identified as academically at-risk, were assigned a teacher mentor with whom they met weekly to discuss short and long term goals and strategies to accomplish these goals. This mentor teacher reviewed the student's cumulative record and contacted each of the

student's teachers to determine areas of concern. The teacher reviewed the student's progress regularly, using an electronic tracking system called Grade Logic as well as meeting with administrators and counselors and the student's parents and classroom teachers.

- *Student Assessment Strategies*: Teachers in one large school discussed students' cumulative files and completed "Cumulative Record Card Overviews" for each child. These overviews were stored and made accessible through a database on the school's network, allowing teachers to review and update students' records throughout the year.

  Another high school used "Teacher Logic XE" to help at-risk students. Department heads generated and reviewed weekly class grading reports and then discussed success strategies with students who were having difficulty (e.g., peer tutoring, receiving extra teacher help, using adapted materials, seeking a teacher mentor). Teachers also used the tool log student meetings and record supports offered as well as parental phone calls. (See http://schoollogic.com/slweb/TeacherLogic.aspx for more information about this electronic grade book.)

- *Project Management/Coordination Strategies*: Lead teachers from each school collaborated with lead teachers at the district-level in professional development activities and sharing opportunities facilitated by the AISI coordinator. Lead teachers then shared what they learned with school-based teams focusing on one or more subject areas identified as needing improvement. AISI team meetings and professional development activities occurred in alternate months. An AISI project review and planning session occurred in June, resulting in a draft plan for the subsequent year; the plan was finalized in October.

- *Professional Development Strategies*: A comprehensive approach to professional development, which involved the AISI teams working collaboratively with the Edmonton Regional Learning Consortium and the St. Albert's Alberta Teachers' Association Local No. 73, was employed within the district to ensure the alignment of professional development with AISI focus areas and goals. Thoughtful planning of team participation in professional development sessions generated excitement, created energy and momentum, built a common vocabulary and understanding, sustained enthusiasm, and allowed for sharing across districts with similar projects. One successful professional development opportunity involved a series of one-hour after school book studies using the books "Summarization in Any Subject" (Wormeli, 2004) and "Reclaiming Youth at Risk: Our Hope for the Future" (Brendtro et al, 2001).[xxv]

- *Parental Involvement Strategies:* One school implemented a "positive phone calls" initiative with the goal to contact 75% of the parents with a positive message about their child before the end of June. Two periods per year per teacher were allocated to this purpose and 80% of students' parents were contacted. This initiative involved the use of regularly updated log books by each staff phone, in which teachers recorded information about each call (e.g., date, name of teacher who called, nature of call, and parents comments).

  In addition, schools have implemented a Web-based Management Information Group module called "Home Logic" that allows parents to

check students' grades and progress reports, schedules, attendance information, and information about assignments. See http://schoollogic.com/slweb/HomeLogic.aspx for more information about this module.

Results

1. High school completion rates for the district increased from 73.7% to 79.9%.
2. The percentage of students achieving an acceptable standard for grade 9 English language arts rose from 93.2% to 95%. The percentage of students achieving an acceptable standard for grade 9 mathematics rose from 76.8% to 77.7% with one school reporting 86.8%. The percentage of students achieving an acceptable standard for Science 10 rose from 87.7% to 100%. Results for students. The percentage of students achieving an acceptable standard for English 30-2 dropped slightly from 90.2% to 89.6%. The percentage of students achieving an acceptable standard for Social Studies 33 fell from 92.8% to 80.1%, however this drop is believed to be attributable to the fact that students, who may have previously not finished high school, are now taking this course.
3. 96.7% of teachers felt that their involvement in the project had positively impacted student learning. Schools reported that more students were staying in school and attempting to complete courses required for graduation.
4. Teachers and administrators involved in the iLab program reported decreased negative student behaviours, increased student attendance and self-esteem, and improved performance in the distance learning courses as well as other courses being taken by these students. Students' feedback was positive and indicated an appreciation of the self-paced, supportive, and quiet learning environment. 100% of iLab students would recommend it to other students experiencing difficulties.
5. 28 of the 40 students involved in the student mentorship program successfully completed their courses. Although teacher mentors expressed frustration that they were not able to realize a 100% success rate, they were convinced that more students stayed in school because of the program and the supportive relationships and sense of belonging that were developed.
6. 95.8% of teachers agreed that valuable professional development experiences were provided through the AISI project (e.g., book study). 99% of the respondents on the AISI annual survey agreed that collaborative planning and professional development were valuable.
7. Parental feedback regarding the "positive phone calls" initiative was 100% positive.

Junior High School-to-High School: Comprehensive Portfolio System to Enhance Career Development Project

Title / Project ID: Comprehensive Portfolio System to Enhance Career Development (10358)

School Authority: Grasslands Regional Division No. 6 (2045)

Scope: 580 Students, Grades 9 to 12, 2 Schools

Project Description: This project was initiated to enhance the Career Development program in two schools by implementing a mandatory portfolio system whereby students kept records, over a three-year period, of their accomplishments, experiences, self-evaluations, career research and educational or career plans.

Improvement Goals, Strategies, and Measures

Goals	Strategies	Measures
1. To assist grade 9 students in their grade 10 course selections during pre-registration. 2. To improve student and parent satisfaction with grade 9 to 10 transitional planning and school-career transitional planning. 3. To assist students' acquisition of the knowledge, skills, attitudes and habits required to respond to the opportunities and expectations of the world of work. 4. To assist students in making well-informed choices about their chosen careers. 5. To improve students' transitions from high school to the workplace and/or post-secondary education. 6. To improve high school completion rates.	• A certified career counselor was hired to promote and teach portfolio development at all three grade levels. • Career counseling was incorporated in various settings by career counselors, teacher advisors and classroom teachers. • Career counseling staff partnered with Youth Connections (see http://employment.alberta.ca/cps/rde/xchg/hre/hs.xsl/2127.html) , the South East Partnership for Youth Development, Entre-corp (see http://www.entre-corp.com/) and other community agencies to develop workshops and classes. • Ongoing teacher professional development opportunities were provided that focused on portfolio development and use. • Parents were offered a workshop about the relevance and use of portfolios.	• District and locally developed school surveys. • Data on students' completion of portfolios. • Tech-prep credentials. • Attendance at workshops and career counseling appointments. • High school completion rates.

Strategies Employed

- *Instructional Strategies:* A variety of strategies were used to enhance career development as follows:
  - Career counseling staff partnered with the South East Partnership for Youth Development, Youth Connections, Entre-corp and other community agencies to develop small-group workshops and classes related to portfolio development, career planning, resumes writing and job interviews.
  - An action plan was designed to assist grade nine students with course selections and career exploration during the pre-registration process.
  - Students taking Knowledge and Employability courses were helped to identify and develop the skills they needed to develop their portfolios. Identified students were made aware of program options such as the Green Certificate, RAP, and Tech Prep.
  - Students were provided with inventories and assessments to assist with their decision-making and career planning.

- Counselors, teachers and parents worked together to help students research, explore and apply for post-secondary educational opportunities. They also coordinated career awareness and exploration activities (e.g., field trips, career fairs, job shadows, guest speakers), maintained an up-to date, active career centre for students, and offered ongoing one-on-one career/life planning and counseling.
- Counselors worked with English as a Second Language students to identify their skills, describe their strengths and introduce them to employability expectations within the community.
- A mandatory portfolio development course was implemented for all grade 10 students. Further development of the portfolio was also incorporated in the CALM curriculum.
- Four sessions were developed for grade 12 students to assist with their transition from high school to post-secondary education and/or the world of work (e.g., how to access university services, how to access services as independent adults).

- *Project Management/Coordination Strategies*: The project was managed by the career counselor with oversight by the school principal.
- *Professional Development Strategies*: The career counselor attended various career-related workshops and conferences and shared information with students and staff.
- *Parental Involvement Strategies:* The career counselor communicated with parents via quarterly newsletters, email announcements, personal interviews, participation at School Advisory Council meetings, and during the planning of the school-wide career information days.

Results

1. High school completion rates remained above the provincial average.
2. More than 80% of the students have completed their portfolios and met acceptable standards for their preparation.
3. Portfolio development became a mandatory course for all grade 10 students (i.e., Portfolio 10).
4. Over 600 students accessed career counseling services.

Junior High School-to-High School: CLC 1 Plugging the Gaps in Transition Project

Title / Project ID: CLC 1 Plugging the Gaps in Transition (701)

School Authority: Calgary School District No. 19 (3030)

Scope: 240 Students, Grades 7 to 10, 9 Schools

Project Description: This joint project by the secondary schools of the Calgary Board of Education's Collaborative Learning Community (CLC) 1 was established to support students achieving below the acceptable standard on grade 6 and 9 Provincial Achievement Tests and other school-based assessments. School teams implemented a variety of strategies to help these students develop their literacy, numeracy and organizational skills (e.g., tutorials, partnering with classroom teachers).

Improvement Goals, Strategies, and Measures

Goals	Strategies	Measures
1. To enhance students' opportunities for success in literacy and numeracy, and growth in organizational skills. 2. To increase students' engagement and connectedness to school. 3. To positively impact the school environment to the benefit of students through enhanced communication and connectedness among students and the adults who share involvement with students (e.g., between the home and school, between schools, and between classrooms). 4. To develop and enhance the skills and competencies of project staff.	• The allocation of professional staff, dedicated to providing support to identified students, was increased in each school. • Identified students were provided with tutorial support and remediation as needed. • Core teachers collaborated with professional staff to ensure student needs were communicated and effective strategies were employed. • Professional development opportunities and time for inter-school collaboration were provided to ensure project staff could share effective strategies. • An "Active Learning Resource Manual" was developed.	• Grade 6 and 9 Provincial Achievement Test results and school-based achievement test results. • Anecdotal accounts of affective, engagement, and attitudinal changes of students. • Attendance records. • "Perception checks" by project staff and administrators.

Strategies Employed

- *Instructional Strategies:* Instructional strategies and learning environments varied based on student needs. Instructional strategies included peer support; goal setting; differentiating instruction; and workshops on developing learning strategies, test taking skills, study skills, communication skills, agenda organization and use; and planning for finals. Learning environments involved one-on-one tutorials; small group instruction; use of in-class aides; and after school clubs (e.g., "Homework Hotel").
- *Project Management/Coordination Strategies*: Project teachers met monthly to share effective teaching strategies and to gather materials for the "Active Learning Resource Manual."
- *Professional Development Strategies*: Project teachers participated in various professional development sessions (e.g., Learning Disability Conference, sessions related to Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorders

(ADHD), math and literacy student skills, assessing student learning, differentiated programming for English as a Second Language learners, learning styles, the AISI Provincial Conference) as well as developed the "Active Learning Resource Manual" for use by project teachers.

- *Parental Involvement Strategies:* Parents were contacted via email, received ongoing communications from project staff, and were surveyed to help identify the needs of each student. Parent/teacher conferences were also conducted.

Results

1. Students' grade and study skills have show improvement.
2. Teachers have expanded their teaching practices to address students' varying learning styles.

High School to Post-Secondary Education and/or Employment: Successful Students via High School Completion

Title / Project ID: Successful Students via High School Completion (30267)

School Authority: Fort Vermilion School Division No. 52 (1250)

Scope: 3500 Students, Grades 4 to 12, 19 Schools

Project Description: This project employed research-based practices to increase the percentage of students completing high school and transitioning to post-secondary education and/or employment. A Director of School Completion worked directly with school administration and teachers, providing them with ongoing direction, mentorship, support and professional development. The director conducted research on the factors affecting each schools' high school completion and transition rates, helped administrators conduct school assessments in the areas of school climate, programming, academic counseling services, community partnerships, and school operations, and developed unique approaches to address areas of need.

Improvement Goals, Strategies, and Measures

Goals	Strategies	Measures
1. Increase the percentage of students completing high school.	• Various strategies (e.g., career programming, business partnerships, internship programs, career fairs, guest speakers, mobile-trades trailers and alternative timetabling) were employed to assess and positively impact the factors that influence students' completion of high school, namely cultural factors, school climate, academic programming, timetabling, and career counseling.	• High school completion rates, dropout rates, and transitions to post-secondary as measured by the associated Accountability Pillar. • Transition rates into grades 10 to 12. • School self-assessment surveys and external reviews. • Parent and student surveys.

Strategies Employed

- *Instructional and Student Assessment Strategies:*
  - A self-assessment toolkit and external reviews were implemented division-wide which revealed recommendations for instructional practice in two schools.
  - Career modules including courses on aptitude assessment and portfolio development were implemented. Career programming was integrated into core programming (e.g., career awareness was integrated into grades 2 to 6 health curricula).
  - Fifteen students participated in a newly implemented housing project which involved a journeyman carpenter/teacher and resulted in the construction of two houses for the local First Nations band.
  - Guest speakers and junior high school career fairs were implemented within the division.
  - Sixty-five new business partnerships were established to support work experience, Registered Apprenticeship Program (RAP) and internship programs.
  - Summer hospital and forest industry internship programs were

expanded to the Copernican system as part of a pilot program.

- Two "travelling-trades trailers" were designed and implemented in the 2008-09 school year to provide Career and Technology Studies (CTS) options (e.g., cosmetology, mechanics and electronics) to smaller schools.
- A Copernican timetable was implemented within the High Level Public School.
- CTS rubrics and exemplars were developed and implemented division-wide.

- *Project Management/Coordination Strategies*: Overall project management was the responsibility of the Director of School Completion (e.g., provided staff with direction, mentorship, support and professional development, conducted research, helped conduct school assessments, and developed unique approaches to address areas of need). Monthly career counselor meetings and quarterly CTS teacher meetings were held. CTS facilities were assessed and upgraded.
- *Professional Development Strategies*:
  - High school counselors engaged in team building activities and developed divisional protocols for grades 7 to 12 counselors. Counselors also received training regarding school safety inspections.
  - CTS teachers accessed the Rural Training Initiative out of Red Deer College and developed standard programming expectations.
  - The Director of School Completion offered nine sessions on School Culture and Climate, Understanding Student Behavior, and Functional Assessment for the Classroom Teacher. Career Cruising training was also provided.
- *Parental Involvement Strategies:* Parents contributed through surveys, external reviews, a Web-based aptitude and career planning application, School Council meetings, public meetings, and school visits.

Results

1. More schools developed school completion programs.
2. High school completions increased by 8%.
3. Students felt that their attendance had improved and they were more responsible for their learning.
4. The average number of credits earned per student increased for those students on the Copernican system.
5. School return rates and transition rates (e.g., from 40 to 80 % for the grade 9 to 10 transition) increased while dropout rates decreased.
6. Parent satisfaction indicators increased.

High School to Post-Secondary Education and/or Employment: Off-Campus Success for At-Risk Students

Title / Project ID: Off-Campus Success for At-Risk Students (30529)

School Authority: Calgary Roman Catholic Separate School District No. 1 (4010)

Scope: 100 Students, Grades 10 to 12, 12 Schools

Project Description: This project focused on helping "early leavers" (i.e., students who do not complete high school) complete their high school education by participating in off-campus work experience or RAP courses, and by developing a career plan with support from a career practitioner and off-campus teachers. The aim of the career plan was to encourage students to return to complete high school.

Improvement Goals, Strategies, and Measures

Goals	Strategies	Measures
1. To increase high school completion rates. 2. To increase enrolment in apprenticeship programs. 3. To help students develop their employability skills and career pathways.	• Off-campus apprenticeship programs and career planning supports were employed to help students (half of whom were identified as at-risk) remain "connected" to their local high school and appreciate the relevance of education to their chosen career path.	• Student entry and exit surveys. • The number of students who enter and remain in the program until completion (e.g., complete high school diploma in 3 or 4 years, obtain Knowledge and Employability certificate, or register as an apprentice). • The number of career planning meetings among students, career practitioners and teachers.

Strategies Employed

- *Instructional Strategies:* Students were provided with one-on-one support from off-campus teachers and the career practitioner. Teachers were available to students off-campus and outside of regular school hours.
- *Project Management/Coordination Strategies*: A consultant and 5 career practitioners were hired. The consultant provided macro- and micro-level support for implementation of the project and worked directly with students, teachers, counselors, administrators and parents to highlight career pathways and provide counseling services.
- *Professional Development Strategies*: One-on-one and small group presentations were made with counselors, administrators and teachers emphasizing the importance of preparing "reluctant" learners for employment as well as helping them appreciate the value of education.
- *Parental Involvement Strategies:* Although found to be a challenge, parents were regularly contacted and kept informed of students' progress.

Results

1. 60% of the students remained in school and nearly 75% continue to have contact with the career practitioners.

High School to Post-Secondary Education and/or Employment: Pyramid of Interventions

Title / Project ID: Pyramid of Interventions (30125)

School Authority: Christ the Redeemer Catholic Separate Regional Division No. 3 (4208)

Scope: 650 Students, Grades 10 to 12, 1 School

Project Description: This project was established to increase high school completion rates and improve academic achievement by collaboratively establishing a "pyramid of interventions" including, but not limited to extra help sessions, enhanced parental communication, improved counseling services, development of a life skills program as an alternative to high school completion, the use of technology (e.g., computers, Web-based learning resources and videoconferencing) to expand students opportunities to learn, and a variety of instructional strategies.

Improvement Goals, Strategies, and Measures

Goals	Strategies	Measures
1. Improve high school completion rates. 2. Improve diploma exam results in Physics, Chemistry, Biology, Applied Math, Pure Math, English, and Social Studies. 3. Improve student success rates in all courses.	• Staff organized themselves as Professional Learning Communities (PLCs). Each PLC developed and implemented a "pyramid of interventions" to positively impact high school completion and academic performance. Proactive and reactive supports or interventions were based on strategies articulated in the book entitled "Whatever It Takes: How Professional Learning Communities Respond When Kids Don't Learn" (DuFour et al, 2004) and the six core principles outlined in the *Hope Foundation*'s book entitled "Failure is not an option: Six Principles That Guide Student Achievement in High Performing Schools" (Blankstein, 2005) and the DVD series "Failure is Not an Option 3 Effective Assessment for Effective Learning" (based on an ASCD Educational Leadership article titled "Seven Practices for Effective Learning" (McTighe and O'Connor, November 2005)).	• High school completion rates. • Diploma exam results. • Total number of courses passed versus number of courses taken. • Parent and student surveys. • Anecdotal qualitative observations by the administrator team. • One-on-one conversations with teachers.

Strategies Employed

- *Instructional and Student Assessment Strategies:*
  - The "pyramids of interventions" developed in this project were founded on the strategies articulated in "Whatever It Takes: How Professional Learning Communities Respond When Kids Don't Learn" (DuFour et al, 2004) and the 6 principles for high performing schools put forward by Blankstein (2005) which include: 1. common vision, mission, values and goals; 2. systems for prevention and intervention; 3. collaborative teaming for teaching and learning; 4. data driven decision making and continuous improvement; 5. active engagement form family and community; and 6. Building sustainable leadership capacity. The development of interventions was informed by other authors including Reeves (2006) in "The Learning Leader: How to Focus School Improvement for Better Results," and Berger (2003) in "An Ethic of Excellence: Building a Culture of Craftsmanship with Students."
  - Students were provided with opportunities to be re-evaluated after

further instruction. School-based assessments were revised for consistency and common exam items were developed for various subject areas by divisional-level committee.

- *Project Management/Coordination Strategies*:
  - At the division level, central office personnel offered ongoing workshops to administrators and AISI lead teachers to support project management and cultivate a "culture of learning" (i.e., renewed focus on teaching and learning, evidence-based decisions, innovation and creativity, shared leadership and language, classroom-based research, and engaging parents). Workshops were also offered on topics ranging from knowledge dissemination and student assessment, to report writing, reflection and goal setting for subsequent phases of the project. Central office also disseminated a project planning tool and made ongoing site visits to the school.
  - At the school level, department heads led their teams in the development of interventions, meeting bi-weekly to continuously develop and assess the quality of the interventions. Administrators met with department heads monthly to do the same. A document of intervention options was developed and publicized, informing parents and students of the various levels of academic support available.
- *Professional Development Strategies*: Department heads attended in-services related to the concept of Professional Learning Communities. Five teachers attended an "Effective Schools Conference." The school's Educational Council studied "Whatever it Takes" by DuFour (2004). "Pyramids of interventions" were the focus of Educational Council (comprised of administrators, team leaders, counselors and learning support personnel), team and staff meetings. Math teachers participated in a two-day workshop on developing higher order questions.
- *Parental Involvement Strategies:* Parental involvement strategies involved reports to the School Council, newsletters, and information sessions (e.g., at assemblies and evening sessions, and during student registration evenings).

Results

1. The high school completion rate remained high at 92.7%.
2. 98% of students agreed that they received the help and support they needed to learn and that school staff cared about them.
3. 100% of parents who completed the survey agreed that the school provided a caring atmosphere.

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Appendix A: Factors That Facilitate Positive Transitions

The following table, which lists the factors that facilitate transitions at each of three levels, was excerpted from Tilleczek, Kate; Community Health Systems Resource Group, Hospital for Sick Children; *Fresh Starts/False Starts: A Review of Literature on the Transition from Elementary to Secondary School*; Paper prepared for the Ontario Education Research Symposium, Ontario Ministry of Education Toronto, Ontario January 18-20, 2007; http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/research/tilleczek.pdf; Retrieved October 2008

Macro Level (Culture and School Structure)

- Attend to social class, gender, and ethnicity, anti-racism, anti-classism, and bullying awareness
- Attend to school-development fit, belonging, friends, teacher training on youth culture and development
- Attend to continuities and discontinuities in elementary and secondary school cultures (structures, practices, pedagogy, assessment, curriculum, teaching, etc)
- Create well coordinated transitions, decrease adjustment time, keep what works, document, describe, communicate, evaluate, adequate information for students and families, focus on long-term adjustment not just immediate movement
- Get administrative work out of the way so that students can focus on school and social events in first weeks
- Engage across panels (parents, students, and educators) with multiple strategies (letters, hotline, websites, visits, clear timetables, open house, handbooks, maps, meet educators, ongoing meetings of personnel, internet chats, teacher/student cross-visits)
- Make time lines and transition plans for each student and parent (attend to at-risk early in elementary school)
- Redirect efforts and funds, assess human and financial supports, identify adult leaders in schools
- Note complexity of "families of schools" model, multiple feeder school possibilities and issues, fewer transitions the better for students

Meso Level (Classes, Friends, Families)

- Focus on teaching style/care, similarities across schools, student input in seating plans, work partners, class activities, sense of belonging, educators as human developers
- Focus on pedagogical issues/similarities across panels, less competitive pedagogy in grade 9, use friends, make friends, task-focused strategies
- Focus on friendships, peer groups and influence, continuity in peer groups, connect students to friends/peers/classmates (seating plans, working groups)
- Focus on shifts in parental/peer relations which occur at the time of transition; parents require more information at precisely the time youth distance from parents
- Focus on counseling & outreach, student success educators, community and parental

input

- Focus on core/bridging curriculum across schools, language across the curriculum, post-induction programs for study and organizational skills, elementary booster classes
- Focus on student success/fresh starts front load success, courses known to inspire success
- Focus on issues of assessment and its practice and meaning across panels, focus on dips in achievement per subject
- Focus on all four pillars of numeracy, literacy, pathways and care/culture/community

Micro (Youth and Educators)

- Primary students are positive and excited about the transition (build on this!); youth should know that some anxiety is expected and appropriate
- Help youth commit to learner identities and belonging, acknowledge strengths, prior achievements, create fresh starts, avoid old labels, students can "unlearn" math, language and reading, change "shirkers" to "workers", friends important, self-perception dips are lasting, set clear goals
- Support at-risk students, look beyond regular assessment data when tracking risk, look to how risk factors play out in class (e.g. boys who are meeting targets but not challenged)
- Engage youth and friends in the transition process at all levels and stages
- Students/parent focus on school, academics, administration, and social issues
- Educators are human developers, educators are also in transition, educators need support

Appendix B: Other Provincial Transition Planning Resources

1. Alberta Children and Youth Initiative; *ACYI Transition Planning Protocol for Youth with Disabilities; Your Guide to Reaching New Heights*; December 2007; http://www.seniors.gov.ab.ca/DisabilitySupports/documents/TransitionPlanningProtocol.pdf; Retrieved October 2008
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[iv] More information about these programs can be found in the report entitled *A Sampling of Outcome Findings from Interventions Relevant to Addressing Barriers to Learning* at http://www.eric.ed.gov/ERICDocs/data/ericdocs2sql/content_storage_01/0000019b/80/15/fb/51.pdf and on the Center for Mental Health in Schools web site at http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu including research excerpts, sample strategy descriptions, references, guiding principles, compilations of transitions practices, and information about data gathering and evaluation.

[v] A more complete synopsis of these factors can be found in Appendix A. For the full report see Tilleczek, Kate; Community Health Systems Resource Group, Hospital for Sick Children; *Fresh Starts/False Starts: A Review of Literature on the Transition from Elementary to Secondary School*; 2007

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